

President's budget would have made them much easier to enact. But, once again, the Administration has chosen to pass its moral responsibilities to the Congress.

For too long, this Administration has ignored the needs of the brave men and women who have defended our interests and our shores. This is unfair. What is more, in my view it is unwise to ignore the well-being of military retirees.

Well-trained, properly motivated troops have been and continue to be the single most important factor in protecting our national security. Without them we will not be able to achieve and maintain military readiness. We will not be able, as a nation, to fight and win. Under current conditions we cannot expect to maintain the levels of re-enlistment, expertise and morale we need to maintain an effective military force.

Last year this Congress took it upon itself to address the critical issue of unconscionably low military pay. I hope and believe that this year we will address the no-less critical issue of unconscionably inadequate health care services for military retirees.

This Congress and the President must take action to address the problems associated with the availability of health care for military retirees. Keeping this nation's promise and providing adequate health care for military retirees is an issue whose time has come. Every day, in hundreds of locations all over the world, our soldiers, sailors and airmen willingly serve in defense of our national interest, promoting peace and prosperity around the globe.

We have asked for the greatest sacrifice from our military retirees and today's men and women in uniform—to give one's life in defense of their nation. When people put themselves in harm's way for their country, they should not have to worry about their families' access to proper health care.

We must act upon the sense of this Congress that the United States has incurred a moral obligation to provide health care to former members of the Armed Forces who are entitled to retired or retainer pay (or its equivalent); and it is, therefore, necessary to provide quality, affordable health to such retirees.

For these reasons I am happy to join with Senators COVERDELL, JOHNSON, and 13 fellow Senators in co-sponsoring the bipartisan Keep Our Promise to America's Military Retirees Act (S. 2003). This legislation is key to re-establishing the morale, confidence and trust of our military retirees.

I urge my colleagues to support this important legislation.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, during the Civil Rights movement, Dr. Carter G. Woodson's idea of a Negro History Week honoring the achievements of African Americans was extended to the entire month of February.

I rise today as a Senator from the state with the largest population of African Americans in the United States to speak on behalf of this year's Black History Month theme "Heritage and Horizons." Harlem, New York was the center of a 1930's Renaissance period. It attracted aspiring individuals from across the country and the world. It is also the birthplace of renowned African Americans who have excelled in the areas of politics and business, arts and entertainment, athletics and activism.

Since the expansion of the Negro History Week to Black History Month, countless African Americans continue to amass accomplishments and shatter barriers worthy of multiple months of tribute. Many of us know of the great strides made by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Frederick Douglass, Booker T. Washington, W. E. B. DuBois, Ida B. Wells, and Rosa Parks. Many of the Members in this chamber have worked alongside Shirley Chisholm, Thurgood Marshall Sr., Charles Rangel, Clifford Alexander, Jr., and Colin Powell.

African Americans from New York have been pioneers in many different fields. In 1981, Pam McAllister Johnson was named publisher of Gannett's Ithaca (NY) Journal, making her the first African American woman to head a general circulation newspaper in the United States. In June 1995, Dr. Lonnie Bristow, a Harlem native, became the first African American appointed as president of the American Medical Association. American Express announced in February 1997 that Kenneth Chenault was named president and heir apparent to the position of CEO, making the Long Island native the highest-ranking African American executive in corporate America.

Art Hardwick, husband of Shirley Chisholm, won the 1962 State Assembly race becoming the first African American to represent Western New York. In 1971, Carmel C. Marr became the first woman of any race to serve as Commissioner of the New York State Public Service Commission. Harry Belafonte, a Harlem native, was recently honored at the Grammy's for his lifetime contributions as an actor and entertainer. Denzel Washington, born and raised in Mount Vernon, recently won a Golden Globe for his role in the movie Hurricane. The critically acclaimed author of *The Women of Brewster Place*, Gloria Naylor, hails from Queens, New York.

In 1957, New York City native Althea Gibson was the first African American woman to compete and win at the Wimbledon and Forest Hills. The following year, she repeated as the Wimbledon and U.S. National Tennis Champion. Former NBA coach and Brooklyn native, Lenny Wilkins, was voted into the Basketball Hall of Fame for holding the NBA record for the most regular season victories by a coach.

Almost 70 years after the Renaissance began, New York continues to be the place where African American

innovators and pioneers distinguish themselves, thereby continuing the Renaissance and enhancing our country.

NOMINATION OF GEORGE DANIELS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I am extremely pleased to rise today to speak about George Daniels, who has just been confirmed as a Federal Judge in the Southern District of New York.

George Daniels is uniquely qualified to serve in this position. His work experience is as diverse and impressive as it gets: He has been a Legal Aid Defense Attorney and a prosecutor; he has worked at a top New York Law firm and served as a Law Professor; he worked in politics as Counsel to the Mayor of New York, and, of course, he has been a Judge—first on the Criminal Court of the City of New York and then as a Justice on the Supreme Court of the State of New York. I know he has the respect and the admiration from individuals on both sides of the aisle.

I am extremely pleased to see him confirmed as a Federal Judge. I know he will be an extraordinary addition to the Southern District of New York bench.

THE VERY BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, at the close of business yesterday, Monday, February 28, 2000, the Federal debt stood at \$5,747,333,809,275.61 (Five trillion, seven hundred forty-seven billion, three hundred thirty-three million, eight hundred nine thousand, two hundred seventy-five dollars and sixty-one cents).

Five years ago, February 28, 1995, the Federal debt stood at \$4,854,298,000,000 (Four trillion, eight hundred fifty-four billion, two hundred ninety-eight million).

Ten years ago, February 28, 1990, the Federal debt stood at \$2,994,354,000,000 (Two trillion, nine hundred ninety-four billion, three hundred fifty-four million).

Fifteen years ago, February 28, 1985, the Federal debt stood at \$1,698,358,000,000 (One trillion, six hundred ninety-eight billion, three hundred fifty-eight million).

Twenty-five years ago, February 28, 1975, the Federal debt stood at \$499,711,000,000 (Four hundred ninety-nine billion, seven hundred eleven million) which reflects a debt increase of more than \$5 trillion—\$5,247,622,809,275.61 (Five trillion, two hundred forty-seven billion, six hundred twenty-two million, eight hundred nine thousand, two hundred seventy-five dollars and sixty-one cents) during the past 25 years.

MESSAGE FROM THE HOUSE

ENROLLED BILL SIGNED

At 2:47 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives delivered by